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SPECIAL COMMITTEE ON THE SITUATION WITH REGARD TO THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE DECLARATION ON THE GRANTING OF INDEPENDENCE TO COLONIAL COUNTRIES AND PEOPLES

VERBATIM RECORD OF THE 1378th MEETING

Held at Headquarters, New York,
on Monday, 22 April 1991, at 10.30 a.m.

Chairman: Mr. TADESSE (Ethiopia)

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The meeting was called to order at 11.20 a.m.

ORGANIZATION OF WORK

The CHAIRMAN: As members are aware, since 1982, in accordance with General Assembly decision 34/401, "Rationalization of the procedures and organization of the General Assembly," the Special Committee has been streamlining its work and adopting resolutions and decisions that have constituted the basis of the recommendations of the Fourth Committee to the General Assembly. This procedure has worked very well in facilitating the work of the Fourth Committee and the General Assembly for several years.

Of late, however, various ideas have been expressed on ways and means to further streamline the work of the Special Committee, particularly with regard to its resolutions and recommendations.

Some members of the Special Committee, as well as a number of speakers who took part in the debates in the Fourth Committee and the General Assembly at the forty-fifth session, while reaffirming the need to intensify efforts towards the speedy decolonization of the remaining Non-Self-Governing Territories, expressed the need to look into the Special Committee's approach, methods and procedure with a view to making the necessary improvements, as appropriate.

As members will recall, at its 1376th meeting, on 20 August 1990, the Special Committee decided to examine the proposal made by the delegation of Norway on the modalities of consolidating the various resolutions regarding the situation in some small Non-Self-Governing Territories during the 1991 session of the Special Committee.

At our opening meeting on 21 February of this year Ambassador Alarcon de Quesada of Cuba suggested that the Special Committee should hold plenary meetings at the very outset of its work this year to discuss the

(The Chairman)

various suggestions and proposals, as well as to hear the views of all members of the Special Commitee concerning the procedure to be followed, in order to improve the Committee's effectiveness and to be in a better position to discharge its mandate. In a letter of 27 February 1991 addressed to me, he reiterated those same views.

As members are also aware, at the first meeting of the Sub-Committee on Small Territories, on 12 March, similar views were expressed by many members of that Sub-Committee. It is my understanding from the discussions that took place in the Sub-Committee and from my private consultations with members of the Special Committee, that this is the right time to consider the merits of those various proposals.

In my view, it would be helpful if the Special Committee were to examine those proposals and make its recommendations to the Sub-Committees before they conclude their substantive work so that the decisions can, as appropriate, be reflected in their recommendations.

Before proceeding to the consideration of those proposals and suggestions, I would like to take this opportunity to share some preliminary views on the purpose of today's meeting and subsequent meetings on the same subject. In my opinion, and probably in the views of the delegations that requested or suggested holding these meetings, our meeting today is the continuation of our common effort to enhance the effectiveness of our work in serving the cause of the remaining Territories according to the Charter of the United Nations and the Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples. Our meeting today to consider the proposals and suggestions is proof that we want to take every opportunity to speed up the implementation of the Declaration and all other relevant resolutions of the

(The Chairman)

United Nations relating to the decolonization of the remaining Territories. While we are open to all suggestions and proposals to that end, we remain firmly committed to the principles of the Charter and the Declaration.

We consider it indeed beneficial, should the Special Committee so decide, to hear the views of Member States that have expressed interest in the work of the Special Committee, as well as those of representatives of Non-Self-Governing Territories who could help us get clear ideas of their positions on the proposals.

Does any member wish to speak at this stage to comment on the point I raised before we proceed to identifying the various proposals and suggestions or to discuss the approach to considering them in detail?

Mr. LEHNE (Norway): I should like to thank you, Mr. Chairman, for calling this meeting, which may prove to be of great value for the Special Committee's continued work at this session.

The delegation of Norway welcomes the initiative taken by the Ambassador of Cuba to have this meeting convened with a view to rationalizing and improving the work of the Special Committee.

We are also grateful for the initiative taken by the Chairman of the Fourth Committee in his attempt to rationalize the work of that Committee, in cooperation with our body, the Special Committee.

Other initiatives are equally valuable for our common task, particularly that taken by the United States, which was presented in a paper distributed to the participants in the Working Group of the Chairman of the Fourth Committee. We strongly support all these initiatives.

Norway has repeatedly advocated a pragmatic approach in order to enhance the cause of decolonization. In our view, such an approach is reflected in, inter alia, the two reports of the regional seminars on the subject of decolonization, which were held in Vanuatu and in Barbados last year. Instead of emphasizing highly sensitive and contentious issues, those seminars highlighted the fundamental principles of decolonization, as embodied in the Charter of the United Nations and as contained in General Assembly resolutions 1514 (XV) and 1541 (XV). On this basis a number of specific recommendations were presented by participants in the seminars and later included in the reports.

During this year's session of the Special Committee it is again my delegation's intention to introduce a draft resolution covering 10 of the Territories on the list of the Sub-Committee on Small Territories. The draft will basically consist of a compilation of well-known and generally recognized

(Mr. Lehne, Norway)

principles concerning decolonization, which today appear in the reports and resolutions on each of the individual 10 Territories. Specific texts for each individual Territory will be added to the omnibus text, which was presented last year. This approach will help to avoid repetition of common language, and highlight the individual situation in each Territory. The rationalization will be found in a considerable shortening of each individual text.

The format of such a consolidated draft resolution may be discussed in the Sub-Committee on Small Territories, where these individual draft resolutions are normally prepared. The Sub-Committee may wish to make its draft proposals to the Special Committee in the format of draft resolutions of the General Assembly or as an integrated part of the omnibus resolution. The former procedure - draft resolutions of the General Assembly - would eliminate an intermediate stage in the channelling of the Sub-Committee's decisions to the Special Committee and subsequently to the General Assembly, thereby avoiding considerable expenses currently incurred by printing and translating the same decisions in two different formats.

The proposal for a consolidated draft resolution must be considered together with other proposals for the reform of our Committee's work. It will, it is to be hoped, emerge in a package which will reflect the common ground for our future work on decolonization matters throughout the 1990s.

Mr. SLABY (Czechoslovakia): My delegation has several times in the past expressed some criticism of the United Nations bodies dealing with decolonization. We did so most openly during the consideration of agenda item 18, under which the report of the Committee on decolonization is presented, by the General Assembly at its forty-fifth session last year. Therefore, we shall not repeat ourselves; we shall take advantage of the fact

(Mr. Slaby, Czechoslovakia)

that we were not alone, that similar voices were raised and that the content and meaning of what they said are now sufficiently clear to all concerned.

If we want to improve something we must know, first, what to improve - that is, we must be familiar with the subject - and, secondly, how to do it. One such subject, in my delegation's view, is the mandate of the Committee of 24. That mandate was given not only by the United Nations Charter, which can be endorsed today, as it has been in the past, but by General Assembly resolution 1514 (XV), the Declaration, on the basis of which the Special Committee was established. While both documents reflect the state of affairs with regard to decolonization at the time of their origin, they should still be regarded as the bench-mark for a new approach to the Special Committee's activities. Therefore, the primary need is to review neither the contents of the Charter nor the contents of the Declaration, but, rather, what the Committee does without having ever been given the mandate to do it.

We refer to a "mandate" which the Special Committee has devised for itself over the decades. In the spirit of Professor Parkinson's laws, the Committee and its Sub-Committees have developed an agenda under which their very goal, the completion of the process of decolonization, serves only as an excuse for their inertia. That can be said about a great deal of what the Special Committe deals with.

I take this opportunity to repeat that my delegation unwaveringly views decolonization as one of the irreplaceable aims of the United Nations today. We do not want to remove decolonization from the United Nations agenda before colonialism in all its manifestations is eliminated. Quite the opposite is true; we want to contribute to attaining that goal.

(Mr. Slaby, Czechoslovakia)

Let us take the United Nations tasks with regard to decolonization as described by the Charter. We have been shown them very graphically in the United States non-paper. Here I merely refer to page 3 of that non-paper, for whose preparation, by the way, we thank the American delegation.

Now, what is the Committe of 24 doing? Let us look at its agenda for this year. The task of decolonization is not only obscured, but, in fact, concealed in it - hidden from many of us so that we no longer even know what it means.

In fact, to decolonize means no more than to eradicate colonialism, no more than to give the populations of Non-Self-Governing Territories an opportunity, guaranteed by the international community, to exercise their right to live not under the yoke of colonialism, but as they themselves want to live. To decolonize is nothing more than to facilitate the implementation of that right, the right to self-determination as it is called. But it is also nothing less.

In other words, most of the present agenda does not emanate from the mandate given by the Charter and by resolution 1514 (XV), but was artificially created. It was created either by the Committee itself or by General Assembly resolutions that may well have had a sound basis in the past but that are outdated and worn out today, resolutions to whose heritage the Committee is presistently clinging, out of pure habit. To put the matter in other words again, the Committee's agenda must be subjected to a thorough purge.

(Mr. Slaby, Czechoslovakia)

If we compare the Special Committee of 24 with other much more typical United Nations subsidiary bodies, we will see that to a considerable degree the Special Committee has a specific structure and set of procedures. Again, this may have been justified in the past, when the Committee was in charge of one third of the world, but it has no basis today when it is in charge of 18 or 19 Territories: 18 or 19 questions. Is the stereotyped insistence on its sprawling structure - with its plenary meetings, its two sub-committees, its working group, its Bureau, its expanded Bureau and its I don't know what else - rational, effective and meaningful? No, it is not.

Why, then, are the Special Committee or its sub-committees perhaps the only bodies of the General Assembly to be in session for half of the year? Why does the Sub-Committee on Small Territories not simply meet for a certain period uninterruptedly to discuss the situation in the 10 small Territories within its competence, all the more so since in the past it did not regard it as necessary to deal with them in the framework of plenary meetings? And why do we seem to think that its agenda might not be successfully considered in a most tolerable one-week-longer session of the whole Special Committee?

And why does the Sub-Committee on Petitions, Information and Assistance not simply meet for a couple of days? Yes, a couple of days: it does not need more time. And here, as a former Chairman of that sub-organ, I am being extraordinarily tolerant, otherwise I would have to suggest in full conformity with my conscience that it meet not for two or three days, but rather for two or three hours - if indeed there is any need at all for us to have it as a separate body, given its agenda. That agenda comprises three items only; moreover, they are items which in fact relate mostly to subsidiary questions and relate to decolonization only on paper.

(Mr. Slaby, Czechoslovakia)

In that context, I would like to mention that my delegation was pleased to note the rejuvenation by the Chairman of that body of the proposal that the two sub-committees be merged. It is that very proposal that we support; in the spirit of what I just said, I would add that there ought to be one sub-committee with fixed dates and a fixed duration for its session, perhaps two weeks or so.

I can go on. Where is it stipulated that the Special Committee of 24 has the right to draft all, or almost all, of the General Assembly's decolonization resolutions? That is not at all usual, at least not in every case by any means. Most United Nations subsidiary bodies adopt only a report and nothing more. Some of them, it is true, adopt their own draft resolutions of which the General Assembly then takes note as part of the report. And there are still fewer bodies - for example such an important one as the Commission on Human Rights - that adopt an overwhelming majority of their own draft resolutions, and just a few bodies, the most important ones, that adopt draft resolutions for the General Assembly or the Economic and Social Council. That should be the practice of the Special Committee too: to adopt its own report, including the draft resolutions contained in it.

By the way, what we have in mind when we speak of the adoption of a report by the Special Committee is the adoption of a report drafted by the Committee itself: the practice to date has been that the Secretariat drafts the report, which diplomats get to see only during General Assembly sessions. This, to be sure, is not the most usual or appropriate pattern. Such a report, adopted by the Committee, could also contain recommendations that the Assembly's Fourth Committee adopt the most important, shall we say conceptual, omnibus draft resolutions. Prior to that, the Fourth Committee would

(Mr. Slaby, Czechoslovakia)

consider, possibly modify and adopt them, unlike the present stereotyped and untenable practice by which it merely takes note of them. It might also draft and adopt draft resolutions of its own.

That is what my delegation would like to say at the moment on the topic of rationalization of the Special Committee's work. We reserve the right to come up with additional ideas or with comments on suggestions made by other delegations later on. At this point, I would like to express once again the Czechoslovak delegation's support for the Norwegian proposal that we adopt a joint draft resolution on small Territories.

The CHAIRMAN: The representative of the United States, an administering Power, has asked to make a statement, and I now call on him.

Mr. CASTRO (United States of America): I should like first to thank you, Sir, for convening this meeting. I also note especially the wise and forthcoming remarks by the representatives of Czechoslovakia and Norway.

The United States is pleased to reaffirm its full support for the process of United Nations decolonization reform, and we fully endorse the ongoing useful reform discussions in the informal working group meetings convened at the initiative of Fourth Committee Chairman Martin Adouki and carried out by the Vice-Chairman, Mr. Al-Kindi.

Our goal is to provide a more constructive focus for the work of the Special Committee of 24 and the Fourth Committee, which would enable the administering Powers and the United Nations together to meet their Charter obligations in the light of the unique characteristics of the remaining Non-Self-Governing Territories. The United States remains willing to cooperate with the decolonization committees to further the goals of

(Mr. Castro, United States)

Chapter XI of the Charter, so long as those committees are willing to adopt a more constructive approach.

To that end, the United States has circulated an informal paper in the Fourth Committee working group which sums up our approach to United Nations decolonization reform and which restates the importance of re-establishing the common ground that was the basis for the acceptance of Chapter XI. In the paper we state that United Nations decolonization committees should ideally serve as forums for the remaining Non-Self-Governing Territories to present their views, that the committees represent fairly and accurately the needs of the Territories, and that the committees provide practical guidance to the Territories regarding the attainment of self-government.

We wish to reiterate our view that in order to achieve those objectives we must work together with you, Sir, and the members of decolonization committees.

In the course of our working group meetings, numerous delegations have put forward useful suggestions for reform. Among some specific suggestions which we have supported are: first, the rationalization of Special Committee of 24 structures, including a proposal by the representative of Papua New Guinea to merge the Sub-Committee on Small Territories and the Sub-Committee on Petitions, Information and Assistance, a view just endorsed by the representative of Czechoslovakia; secondly, the adoption of a consolidated draft resolution for 10 of the Non-Self-Governing Territories, just proposed by the delegation of Norway; thirdly, the review of annual draft resolutions to determine their relevance to the specific circumstances of the remaining Non-Self-Governing Territories; and fourthly, the elimination of name-calling, references to apartheid and ideological or anachronistic rhetoric in debates

(Mr. Castro, United States)

and draft resolutions and the acknowledgement of positive aspects of foreign economic interests and military installations in the Territories.

We hope that through these valuable reform efforts, both by the Special Committee and by the informal working group, United Nations decolonization committees can be more responsive in meeting the particular needs of the remaining Non-Self-Governing Territories. As we have mentioned in our Fourth Committee statements, the United States is encouraged by this serious attention being given to reform. We urge the Special Committee to consider seriously the proposals of the working group and to adopt significant reform measures before the convening of the forty-sixth session of the General Assembly this fall.

Mr. ALARCON de QUESADA (Cuba) (interpretation from Spanish): I should like at the outset to say that my delegation is approaching this discussion with no inferiority complex or feelings of shame. It would appear, Sir, that the Committee is in a very good position to proceed with this discussion, among other reasons, in the light of the initial comments you made, which my delegation fully shares. What we are in fact doing is continuing an effort which this Committee has been engaged in for some time. We believe also, like you, that that effort should be based on a clear commitment to the Charter and to General Assembly resolution 1514 (XV), which is what has given us the mandate that we must fulfil.

When it comes to analysing means of enhancing the work of this Committee, I do not believe that we should abandon a just and objective perspective of the work that the Committee and, in general, that the United Nations have carried out in decolonization. I believe it would be very useful, firstly, for us to consider and compare the activity of the Organization in decolonization with the activities of the Organization, I would say, in any other sphere of importance. If we do that, we should have a certain sense of satisfaction at being members of a Committee which can present a record of feats and achievements about which very few other subsidiary bodies of the Organization could boast.

Let us imagine for a moment that we were to make a similar assessment of organs of this Organization which, for half a century, have been dealing with issues of disarmament. Can we imagine a moment when we could talk about the residual problems in the field of disarmament? We all know that, year after year, there are different bodies, different forums of the Organization which have worked tirelessly, while the arms race, far from improving, has been

(Mr. Alarcon de Quesada, Cuba)

worsening owing, for example, to new weapons and new trends. Hopefully, the day will come when the Committee on Disarmament will be able to begin to take stock of its work, when only residual problems will remain in this area, in which it has been bogged down for decades without, quite frankly, managing to come up with results that are even remotely comparable to the achievements the Organization has made in decolonization.

Can any of my colleagues here imagine, especially my colleagues from the third world, our engaging in a similar exercise in any of the subsidiary bodies which address issues of economic development and international economic cooperation? Can anyone imagine such a happy day when representatives of African, Asian, Latin American and Caribbean States could come together in a meeting where we would be addressing the remaining aspects of the problems of underdevelopment, when we would have before us the happy opportunity of considering how to accomplish what had already been achieved in international economic cooperation? None the less, for half a century, promotion of international economic cooperation has appeared in the Charter as an aspiration together with complete and general disarmament, and during that half century, in various forums of the system, we have devoted lengthy hours to activities which remain rhetorical, as in the sphere of disarmament, which have not led to such results as those achieved by the Committee.

That is why I say that we are approaching this discussion with no inferiority complex or feelings of shame, because this Committee, as you have reminded us, Sir, has not only shown for some time that it can examine how to improve and refine its work, but also has indeed been one of the few bodies of the United Nations which can present a record of which the Organization can

(Mr. Alarcon de Quesada, Cuba)

feel proud. Rather, the consideration of the work of this Committee in its proper perspective should provide a stimulus to other organs, committees and commissions of the Organization to give thought as to how they too could achieve progress in their respective areas of activity.

There is an additional reason, which is the fact that we can observe that we have covered a long road in the implementation of resolution 1514 (XV), and we should consider how we could be more effective in ensuring that the goals of the Declaration are fulfilled and applied also with respect to the Territories remaining in the world that have not yet reached a position enabling them to achieve the objectives of that Declaration.

I think it is a very healthy and useful thing for us to engage in this reflection, for us to consider ways and means to achieve full implementation of the Declaration, for us to do this in an appropriate way, which does not attempt in vain to deny history or pretend, arbitrarily, to present this Committee as if there had not been a real process of decolonization in the world, a process in which the Committee did play an important role. We must not disregard the reality that there are few organs in the Organization about which anyone can say seriously that such substantial progress has been made as in this body. Indeed, the objective of this consideration cannot be other than achieving the completion of the mandate given us.

Let me say frankly that my delegation believes that we should review the activities of the Committee in a more rigorous and critical spirit, but with a clear anti-colonial approach. The criticisms that may come from outside the Committee, promoted or encouraged by those interested in ensuring that the Declaration is not applied, have absolutely nothing new about them.

(Mr. Alarcon de Quesada, Cuba)

We all know that these criticisms and this hostile attitude towards the Committee's work and resolution 1514 (XV) have existed since the very time when the Declaration was adopted in 1960. But we cannot allow ourselves to submit to external pressures, because that would be a betrayal of the Committee's history. Despite these criticisms and the lack of cooperation that the Committee has endured since its establishment, the decolonization process has moved forward, it has spread throughout the world, and it is one of the major elements of the new international reality we are experiencing today. For us to agree at this stage to call into question the basic approaches, the fundamental posture and the basic obligations of the Committee would, in our view, be completely unjustifiable, indeed completely meaningless.

The Committee should examine how it can contribute most effectively to ensuring that all the Non-Self-Governing Territories, all the Territories that have not yet achieved independence, can enjoy the same rights as those which have achieved self-determination and are now with us here as Members of the United Nations.

References have been made from time to time to the changes in international relations, to the new situation prevailing today in the world - a situation characterized primarily by a new relationship between the East and the West, resulting from the disappearance of the elements of confrontation that had marked the former historical period.

In this respect, it is worth noting that colonialism was not a result of the East-West confrontation but, rather, had existed long before these concepts were formed; that the decolonization process began well before the emergence of the first signs of détente in East-West relations; and that, in

(Mr. Alarcon de Quesada, Cuba)

analysing the present international situation, we should not take a purely Europeanistic approach, repeating the language of the old colonialism, or forget that among the major factors that led to the appearance of a new set of international relations were precisely the achievements in the sphere of decolonization.

One aspect that has been mentioned more than once in these discussions, here and in other forums, is the cooperation of the administering Powers with the Committee's work. In our view, this has always been an important factor, either in facilitating or in obstructing the work that our Committee has done. We have become accustomed to, and we welcome, the presence here of representatives of Portugal and New Zealand, two countries which, in one way or another, have been very much involved in the Committee's activities and whose cooperation with the Committee has been extremely relevant.

But let us be frank: if the new Portugal cooperates closely, in a way that we welcome, with this Committee, it is in large part because of the changes produced in that country by the "April revolution", which led to Portugal's moving from being a Power that did not cooperate with the Committee - indeed, that engaged in confrontation with it for a long time - to being a country that not only was able to give form to the principles of the Declaration in the Territories it administered, but was able to take a historic turn of inestimable significance and then to establish fruitful and friendly cooperation with the Committee, which we all welcome. Today it is a country that consistently participates in and contributes to this body's work. This is precisely what we should aspire to: that the remaining administering Powers fully shoulder their obligations under the Charter and extend effective, real cooperation to our Committee in its work.

(Mr. Alarcon de Quesada, Cuba)

Reference has also been made, when our discussions have taken a philosophical turn, to the question of the options that peoples in the still colonized Territories have. In this respect, I wish to make some very brief comments.

First, this Committee has to act and continue acting within the very specific mandate which the General Assembly gave it and which is contained in the very title of our body - that is, the title of the Declaration in resolution 1514 (XV). That is the only thing that must guide the Committee's activities. And that Declaration is very clear. It does not imply the imposition upon any people or any Territory of a given form for expressing its choice of its political destiny. The key to the matter lies in the concept of self-determination. The prefix "self", which I think has the same meaning in all languages, implies that it is the people itself which must take the relevant decisions. In other words, it takes those decisions independently of the will or the pressures that others may seek to exert. We must ensure that all the peoples of all the Territories that still fall within the purview of this Committee's concerns are enabled to decide their fate for themselves. Whatever may be the physical dimensions of their territory, whatever may be their limitations and their material or physical problems, we have the obligation to continue to act with the same zeal and the same coherence. For, after all, that is what makes it possible for us to present an exceptionally positive historical record in the United Nations.

And when it comes to examining, studying, discussing how to improve our work, we should do so without inferiority complexes, without being ashamed - feelings that are sometimes indispensable in other forums of the Organization but certainly not here - because that would be to deny history. For my

(Mr. Alarcon de Quesada, Cuba)

delegation, when this exercise is being carried out, the fundamental point is to listen to the ideas, the concerns, the problems that the representatives of the Territories may wish to present to us, as well as the opinions, the criteria or the proposals of any Member of our Organization. In that respect, we agree with what you said, Mr. Chairman, in your introductory comments.

(Mr. Alarcon de Quesada, Cuba)

With regard to the proposal by the Norwegian delegation on the omnibus draft resolution on the small Territories, let me say only that my delegation has been working on some ideas which could contribute to ensuring that the text by our colleagues from Norway reflected some of the issues it addresses in a more appropriate manner, in our view. We are of course entirely prepared to consider, along with that delegation and other members of the Committee, the possibilities for achieving a single text that would address all these important problems appropriately.

Mr. URIARTE (Chile) (interpretation from Spanish): My delegation has listened with particular interest to the statements of previous speakers. In my delegation's view, we should draw a clear distinction.

On the one hand, we cannot negate a whole historical process, already referred to by the Ambassador of Cuba, or the positive work and achievements of the decolonization Committee and - why not say so? the Fourth Committee too - in the past. There is no doubt that this is an area - and here I fully agree with the Ambassador of Cuba - where we can demonstrate the greatest achievements in the United Nations. I need not repeat the argument that we have just heard.

On the other hand, while not failing to recognize those achievements, that history, that tradition, those concrete results, we must turn to another aspect, that of organizing our work efficiently in the light not only of new international developments, but especially of the experience this Committee has been accumulating in recent years. As we approach that organizational task, whether we call it rationalizing our work or restructuring it, we should always bear in mind that we should not misinterpret this process of restructuring, reorganization or rationalization. It is not that we are

(Mr. Uriarte, Chile)

seeking to modify our method of work because the past proceedings of the Committee of 24 have been mistaken or have failed; rather, it is precisely because it has been very successful in those past proceedings, because it has achieved very important results.

It is in the light of new realities that we must analyse our future work. In my delegation's view, that is where the main question lies: we should not misinterpret this work of restructuring or reorganization, we should not interpret it as meaning that the past work of this Committee for some decades was not very successful. Quite the contrary, it was successful, very successful.

That is why the Chilean delegation regards initiatives of Norway, Czechoslovakia and the United States, and others that we may have before us, as positive, in the sense that they are deserving of study. We are prepared to work on them, though always bearing in mind that the Committee of 24 has done its work, and amply too, and that it still has a range of activities to carry out. As to this future action, this is where we must find the best way to function more efficiently and in keeping with our times, but without forgetting, I say once more, the historical tradition we hold in our hands.

Mr. MDEE (United Republic of Tanzania): On behalf of my delegation, may I associate myself with the remarks already made by those people who have been thanking you, Mr. Chairman, for convening this meeting. I think it is a very useful opportunity for us to be able to exchange views on how we should proceed with our work, given the successes we have recorded so far.

(Mr. Mdee, United Republic of Tanzania)

As part of the proposed rationalization of the work of this Committee, and consequently of the work of the Fourth Committee, it has been suggested that an omnibus resolution should be adopted encompassing 10 of the Territories instead of the current resolutions on each.

At the time the Norwegian delegation made this proposal last summer, my delegation made it very clear that we had no objection to an omnibus resolution provided it did not do the following: first, disregard the need to highlight salient and pertinent peculiarities of each Territory; and, secondly, deny the other members of the General Assembly the opportunity to raise any points they might have on any of the Territories covered by the omnibus resolution. That remains our position today.

It has also been argued, this morning too, that the discussion on apartheid in this Committee and in the Fourth Committee is no longer relevant in view of Namibia's accession to independence. This is a view my delegation cannot accept. Colonized Namibia gave added reason for the decolonization Committee to discuss apartheid South Africa; it was not the sole, but an additional reason why discussion on apartheid found its way into the Committee's deliberations.

Apartheid in South Africa is a direct result of an act of colonialism which began with the British and was, in 1910, passed on to the Boers. The act of the British in handing over the mantle of their colonialism over South Africa to the Boers did not constitute an act of self-determination on the part of the people of South Africa: it constituted a change of masters from metropolitan Britain to Boer compradors in South Africa. It did not bring with it the attributes of a decolonized situation, such as the right to vote

(Mr. Mdee, United Republic of Tanzania)

or be voted into positions of leadership in the Government. Nor, indeed, did it bring to the colonized people of South Africa the right to determine their own affairs. On the contrary, this change led to the introduction of formal apartheid 38 years down the road, with all the deprivations that went with it over basic human rights, land and education for the oppressed majority. The major difference between British colonialism in South Africa and the current situation in that country is that the colonizing master and the colonized are both resident within the same borders.

It is true that the United Nations has other forums where the question of South Africa is taken up.

(Mr. Mdee, United Republic of Tanzania)

But in my delegation's view, to the extent that apartheid is a direct outcome of an aborted process of decolonization, there is no better place than in this Committee to discuss apartheid. Further, the mere fact of this Committee discussing apartheid constitutes one more form of moral pressure on the regime in Pretoria. Tanzania welcomes this pressure because, in spite of some incredible haste in certain quarters to relax pressure on the racists, we do not believe this is the time to do so.

My delegation finds intriguing the assertion that language in our resolutions is failing to keep pace with the changed international climate. In this regard, we would like to ask if the changed climate has led to more administering Powers coming forward to cooperate in the work of the Committee. The answer is no. Again, we ask if the changed climate has given rise to the administering Powers' allowing visiting missions from the Committee to the Non-Self-Governing Territories. Here also, the answer is no.

So what direct effects has the changed international climate had on the process of self-determination among the colonized peoples to justify change in either tactics or language in this Committee? My delegation finds none. It is our firmly held view that only a change in the colonial status of the Territories under discussion can warrant a change of language. We therefore reject the assertion that language used in the resolutions of this Committee is anachronistic or out-of-date. However, what we do find anachronistic is the fact that, today, when we are approaching the twenty-first century, there should be a group of people who still hold onto colonies.

All of this is not to say that the Committee's work style cannot benefit from meaningful change. It can. But these changes must be aimed at enhancing its work and effectiveness. My delegation would, for instance, like to see

(Mr. Mdee, United Republic of Tanzania)

our Committee receiving the full cooperation of all administering Powers to facilitate the goal of the complete eradication of colonialism by the end of this century, as has been determined by the General Assembly. Secondly, we would like to see a resort to the system whereby administering Powers receive visiting missions from the Committee to enable it to establish direct communication with the colonized people and obtain up-to-date information on the progress, or lack of it, towards the goal of self-determination. Thirdly, we would like to see provision made for representatives of the colonized people to have permanent observer status at all working sessions of the Committee of 24 and all its Sub-Committees.

Finally, my delegation would like to state that we would never be a party to any move aimed at eliminating the Committee of 24 until its mandate has been fulfilled.

Mr. LOHIA (Papua New Guinea): I take this opportunity to thank you, Sir, and to congratulate you on the work this Committee has been carrying out on behalf of colonized peoples and Territories. As has been stated, the review process and the attempt to improve our deliberations, as well as the draft resolutions resulting from the Committee's consideration, are ongoing matters. Therefore I do welcome this opportunity to be a party to the general consideration of the review of our operations.

There has been a tremendous discussion in the international community about the need for review in order that the United Nations can respond to the needs of the world at large, especially to the need for the peace, security and prosperity of all our peoples. Beyond that, there are many people throughout the world who live under subjugation, oppression and what is now in the English language called "colonialism". Obviously, this Committee is

(Mr. Lohia, Papua New Guinea)

charged by the General Assembly with ensuring that colonized people all over the world are finally freed. My delegation is committed to pursuing that cause.

I speak at this stage because references have been made to the suggestions my delegation has made in other forums. I was hoping that an appropriate time would present itself in which to deliberate on those issues, but since these references have been made, I would like to confirm that it is my delegation's view that there is a duplication of our work in the two Sub-Committees.

Since there are 18 Non-Self-Governing Territories formally on the United Nations agenda, and also that there may be as many as 3 million colonized people in question, it has been suggested that we review our operations. I do not conform to that view. My view is that the Committee has the responsibility to review its work at all times, whether we have one Territory or 18. The point is that people are living under colonial domination; thus, the attempt of the United Nations to free those people, in line with the requirements of human rights and in relation to the work of this Committee, is very important. I believe that the Committee would be more effective if all the small Territories were considered by the Sub-Committee on Small Territories in all their aspects.

Information is very important. Therefore, petitions are very important. I find it rather amusing that the Sub-Committee on Petitions, Information and Assistance is not even in a position to hear petitioners. How can that Sub-Committee make any sense out of information or make effective recommendations to the main Committee? In my capacity as Chairman of the Sub-Committee - and I thank the Committee for honouring me with that task - I

(Mr. Lohia, Papua New Guinea)

have suggested that I oversee the Committee's work in relation to the work of the other Sub-Committee in order that we might, towards the end of our work this year, make some recommendations for the plenary Committee to make the necessary arrangements in order to improve our work.

It is important that we look at the peoples and their Territories in relation to their culture, their language, their economic potential and future, and their social and all other considerations. I find it difficult to understand that an omnibus resolution would take care of many of these important problems. I also do not understand how the independence and sovereignty of the various administering Powers would allow for all the small Territories to be considered under one resolution.

(Mr. Lohia, Papua New Guinea)

I find some very important difficulties here, because each Government, each administering Power, has its own laws and its own rules in relation to those Territories. Therefore, bringing them all under one roof will create many difficulties for anyone trying to understand the relationship between the administering Power and the Territories concerned.

I agree with the idea that it may be possible to merge certain principles into a single draft resolution, and if such a draft resolution were to emerge, I would go along with it. But my delegation would not go along with the idea that all the Territories, with different administering Powers, should be grouped into one draft resolution. That reasoning is very difficult for me to understand.

My delegation will work closely with the delegation of Norway and others to see whether or not we can come up with an omnibus draft resolution that will deal with particular and related problems but that will not discount the importance of the peoples themselves, all of whom have their own languages, cultures and societies, who have their own economic conditions and who have different administering Powers and different laws governing their day-to-day lives. For those reasons, I should like to study them quite clearly in relation to that arrangement.

The administering Powers have their own legislations, and we want to see how that affects the governing, development and progress of the dependent Territories. I cannot, therefore, see how we can make the problems any simpler by lumping everything together. We are dealing with different Governments and different cultures; they pass legislation at different times; the operations of the individual Governments are quite different from each other. It is of the utmost importance that we understand the relationship

(Mr. Lohia, Papua New Guinea)

between the Territories and their administering Powers. It is important for the peoples and for the Territories, and it is important for regional organizations like the South Pacific Forum. The South Pacific Forum would not mix the consideration of New Caledonia with the consideration of other Territories with different administering Powers.

At the Vanuatu Seminar, which was so successfully organized by the Chairman, it was suggested that the criteria for colonialism should be reviewed. Who are the colonized? What are the conditions of colonialism? Who really comes under those categories? I think that we can find situations that may meet the criteria. If there is an understanding by the United Nations that certain colonial Territories can be administered differently by the administering Powers, then I think we ought to know. I cannot imagine how we will be able to achieve the goal set by the United Nations in its decision to achieve the eradication of colonialism by the year 2000 when we know that there may still be some situations where different arrangements persist. This is a world Organization, and the world community is becoming smaller. We therefore need to encourage better understanding between our peoples, our Governments and the rest of the United Nations community.

We appreciate the cooperation between East and West that we have witnessed in the recent past, but there are still many problem areas. Cooperation between North and South is still to be achieved. There are still difficulties in trade relations between developing and developed countries and many gaps continue to exist. For example, how can the colonial Territories, which have less than the independent developing countries, gain access to the international economy?

(Mr. Lohia, Papua New Guinea)

The situation is very difficult, and we are therefore happy that some administering Powers are willing to come forward and cooperate with the work of the Special Committee. I think it is important that they provide the necessary information, but, at the same time, I think it is high time for the United Nations to go out and seek information from the people of the Territories themselves - information on their cultural conditions, their social conditions, their economic conditions, their political progress. It is about time the United Nations went to the people.

We have been expecting representatives of the colonialized peoples to appear here before the Special Committee, but our procedures make it very difficult for them even to have knowledge of our programme of work so that they can come here to provide information directly to us. For that reason, I would hope that the Special Committee will look at our procedures and try to encourage more participation by the colonialized peoples, by the various groups representing them and by the administering Powers, in keeping with the provisions of the United Nations Charter.

My delegation will continue to assist the Chairman in his deliberations designed to improve and streamline our work so that we can reach out to the peoples who need the Special Committee and the United Nations until the United Nations decision calling for the eradication of colonialism by the year 2000 has been fulfilled. I cannot help wondering why this seems more important today than it was back in the days when there were so many Territories on the list. There is a tendency to feel that it no longer matters, that small Territories are small and can therefore be forgotten. I hope that is not the understanding.

Mr. DIARRA (Mali) (interpretation from French): I should like to thank the Chairman for having organized this exchange of views between the Special Committee of 24 and the administering Powers of the Non-Self-Governing Territories. My delegation believes that it is the sacred duty of the Special Committee - one all the more sacred inasmuch as most of its members have been former colonies that emerged from the decolonization process initiated by the United Nations - to follow the economic, social and political development of the Non-Self-Governing Territories and their progress towards self-determination and, if necessary, independence.

That is a mandate conferred on us by the General Assembly. In fulfilling that mandate, certain principles have been defined, and I should like to enumerate some of them. First, there is the principle that all peoples have the right to determine their own future, a right that leads naturally to self-determination and the choice of their future political status, be it independence or association. Secondly, there is the inalienable right of the peoples concerned to dispose of the natural resources within their territories. And there are still other principles, among them the non-use of such territories as military bases to serve the strategic interests of the administering Powers. Those are but a few of the principles involved, but, whatever approach we may take, my delegation views them as the main ones to be safeguarded.

(Mr. Diarra, Mali)

Over and above those principles there are certain responsibilities expressly conferred on the administering Powers by the United Nations Charter, and these cannot be shirked.

That is the framework within which we can move forward in our assessment of the work of rationalization that we wish to carry out. Suggestions have been made with regard to that rationalization. The delegation of Norway has put forward an omnibus draft resolution, and my delegation notes with satisfaction that there is an improvement since last year, when the first version was submitted for consideration by the Special Committee. There is now an annex addressing the specific case of Anguilla, and the introductory note to the draft resolution indicates that there will be similar annexes for each Territory. That is an improvement that in part takes into account the kind of the concerns expressed last year by several delegations, including my own.

In addition to the proposal by Norway, several suggestions have been made by the delegation of Czechoslovakia. Unfortunately, we were not able to take a note of all those suggestions as they were being made. We shall be happy to receive them in writing. There are also the suggestions made by the delegation of the United States, which are now under consideration within an informal working group established by the Chairman of the Fourth Committee.

To conclude, I wish to say that my delegation is prepared to cooperate with the other members of the Special Committee, either formally or in a working group, to consider in a constructive spirit all the suggestions that have been made. We must say straight away that we may not be able to endorse certain suggestions. No member of my delegation feels that the presence of a military base on a Non-Self-Governing Territory can be beneficial to that

(Mr. Diarra, Mali)

territory or to neighbouring countries. No member of my delegation could agree that as a result of the independence of Namibia matters with regard to the apartheid regime can be regarded as being outside the Special Committee's competence.

Therefore, whatever approach we may take in examining these proposals, my delegation would like to see them in writing, to help us with our consideration and to avoid any ambiguous interpretations.

Mr. JOMAA (Tunisia) (interpretation from French): I wish first to thank you, Mr. Chairman, for having convened this meeting. This is a very important meeting, since we now have a number of proposals on the questions of decolonization and the work of the Fourth Committee made by various members, especially with regard to the Sub-Committee on Small Territories, which I chair. As Chairman of that Sub-Committee, I note that the proposal made by the delegation of Norway has met with a more or less positive reaction. Every delegation has said that it is prepared to work on that proposal, with certain improvements that some delegations have proposed. These will, of course, be taken into account when we start to discuss, formally or informally, the whole question of the omnibus draft resolution.

I wish simply to say how open I am to any suggestion our Special Committee may wish to make, because in the Sub-Committee we are now at an advanced stage of consideration of our working documents. We should consider our report in the light of any decision that the Committee may make in connection with any proposal, particularly that made by Norway regarding the omnibus draft resolution. It would be useful if the Committee took a speedy decision on that and related matters, in order to facilitate our work and so that we may see how this fits in with the restructuring of our work and so

(Mr. Jomaa, Tunisia)

that we may complete our work in time - indeed, even before the end of the time allotted for the completion of our Sub-Committee's work.

I repeat that I am open to any suggestion the Committee or you, Mr. Chairman, may make. We should like the Committee to take a decision speedily in order to facilitate our work.

Mr. SHEIKH ZEINELDDIN (Islamic Republic of Iran): First, it is my duty to thank the Ambassador of Papua New Guinea for using the word "review" instead of "rationalization". It is very important to bear in mind that the Committee's work has always been rationalized, as my non-aligned colleagues on the Committee have said, particularly the Ambassador of Cuba.

Secondly, I should like to add my view to the views expressed on how to promote the Committee's work. Since I have been working on the Committee for two years I have some practical experience that I think could be helpful to all those present.

My first point concerns the link between the two Sub-Committees - the Sub-Committee on Small Territories and the Sub-Committee on Petitions, Information and Assistance. The representative of Papua New Guinea mentioned that link, which is very important, because the work of the two Sub-Committees is aimed at achieving the same goal. But in the two years that I have been working with the Sub-Committees I have sometimes seen a lack of connection between the two. I think that we can follow tradition and keep the two Sub-Committees, but if they shared the same secretary more would be achieved.

My second point is that we are dealing with the question of decolonization. The International Decade for the Eradication of Colonialism will end in the year 2000. There is a draft decision requesting the Secretary-General to prepare a plan of action for the eradication of

(Mr. Sheikh Zeinelddin, Islamic Republic of Iran)

colonialism in this decade. The question is also considered under the General Assembly's agenda item 18. I see no link between that question and the work of the Committee of 24 to be carried out by the non-aligned countries. It could be helpful to us to bear that in mind.

(Mr. Sheikh Zeinelddin, Islamic Republic of Iran)

The third question, which I have already mentioned in the Sub-Committee on Small Territories, relates to the structure of working papers; it could be very useful for us to consider this before the preparation of such papers. The same structure could be used for all working papers, as a point of reference for all our draft resolutions. This too could be very helpful and could reflect the lack of cooperation by administering Powers.

Mr. KADRAT (Iraq) (interpretation from Arabic): Several previous speakers have addressed various aspects of the proposals before us. Many proposals have been submitted, and the Committee should study them without prejudice to the main principles relating to the work of the Committee and its mandate. Proposals are normally submitted to sub-committees, where they are revised and amended until they are agreed upon by all. It is necessary to take account of the individual characteristics and cultural and social background of each Territory; each Territory is unique. Moreover, the administering Powers differ in the information they provide to the Special Committee on their Territories, and in the laws they draft and adopt for each Territory.

My delegation is ready to cooperate with other delegations to achieve the best possible results on all items under discussion.

The CHAIRMAN: I wish to inform members that I have received a request from the Acting Chairman of the Fourth Committee to address the Special Committee on behalf of Ambassador Adouki, Chairman of the Fourth Committee, who, as members know, was engaged in informal consultations on issues relating to our deliberations.

In accordance with established practice, and if there is no objection, I shall now call upon Mr. Mohammad Saeed Al-Kindi, Acting Chairman of the Fourth Committee.

Mr. AL-KINDI (United Arab Emirates), Acting Chairman of the Fourth Committee of the General Assembly (interpretation from Arabic): Since I am addressing the Special Committee for the first time, I wish to say that it gives me great pleasure, Sir, to see you presiding over the work of the Committee; I am confident that you will guide the Committee's business wisely and successfully.

The Chairman of the Fourth Committee, Ambassador Martin Adouki, whom I have the honour to represent here, has asked me to convey his regret that he cannot attend this important meeting, as he had to leave New York to attend to official business in his country.

It has become customary in some quarters, particularly since the independence of Namibia, to claim that the colonial era is over and that therefore the United Nations should no longer devote its energy and resources to that issue. To substantiate their claim they have often pointed to what they perceive as the gap between action based on long-standing approaches to decolonization issues and the real situation in the remaining Non-Self-Governing Territories. The criticism has focused on the language of our resolutions, which, they have said, is anachronistic, and on the format of our resolutions, which, according to them, could be considerably improved and rationalized. References to certain questions of common concern to the Members of the Organization have also been targeted by some as being out of place or unnecessarily contentious.

Those who participated in the work of the Fourth Committee during the forty-fifth session know how disturbing that situation had become for the spirit of consensus that has always prevailed in the fulfilment of our noble tasks. That is why, in an attempt to explore all avenues that might restore confidence and cooperation in the discharge of our common mandate,

(Mr. Al-Kindi, Acting Chairman, Fourth Committee)

Ambassador Adouki undertook to propose that all parties concerned meet to discuss informally the issues at stake. The encouraging support the idea received in the General Assembly is proof that we are on the right path, and it is gratifying to note that the Special Committee has decided to discuss these issues.

In keeping with the undertaking given by Ambassador Adouki at the 1377th meeting of the Special Committee, I have asked to speak in order to keep the Committee abreast of the stage reached in our informal discussions at the Fourth Committee level.

As Ambassador Adouki has already informed the Special Committee, the Bureau of the Fourth Committee has prepared an unofficial document on the question, entitled "Comments concerning the work of the Fourth Committee", which was distributed to the officers of the Special Committee, the Chairmen of regional groups, and the administering Powers. Copies of that document are available for any member who has not yet received one.

So far we have held three informal meetings, and almost one third of the Organization's membership has attended each of our meetings. The discussions have been frank and direct and have concentrated mainly on what might be done to improve our approach and methodology and to restore full cooperation with the administering Powers. In that connection, we were gratified to note that the vast majority of the administering Powers have participated in our meetings and have been very active in the discussions.

During the course of the informal meetings, discussion concerning the consolidation of draft resolutions has been wide-ranging, and a number of informal suggestions have been made, although no decision has yet been reached on this issue.

(Mr. Al-Kindi, Acting Chairman, Fourth Committee)

Most participants have stated that there is indeed room for improvement in the wording of the Fourth Committee's resolutions, both in their format and their content. Some have stated that what they perceived to be extraneous issues should be eliminated from the resolutions. Discussions are still continuing with the object, I trust, of reaching consensus.

With respect to visiting missions and transmission of information to the United Nations in accordance with Article 73 e of the Charter, several delegations made suggestions which are still being discussed.

This has been a very brief summation of the ongoing discussions in the informal consultations. Echoing the words of Mr. Adouki at the last meeting of the Special Committee, it is our intention to keep the Committee of 24 fully apprised of developments in our future meetings as they evolve.

The CHAIRMAN: I wish to inform members that I have received a request from the representative of the Government of the United States Virgin Islands to be permitted to address the Special Committee. This request was circulated to members in aide-mémoire 6/91.

In accordance with established practice, and as I hear no objection, I now call on Mr. Carlyle Corbin.

Mr. CORBIN: I should like to extend greetings to the members of the Bureau and the other members of the Special Committee, and to take the opportunity to wish the Committee a successful session. I should also like to thank you for the opportunity to present our views here today. We regret that, owing to certain administrative difficulties, our views could not be presented in the Working Group of the Fourth Committee, which was referred to several times today.

(Mr. Corbin)

The views of my Government and of the Government of the Non-Self-Governing Territory of Guam were made clear last year in correspondence to you, Mr. Chairman, and we shall attempt to expand a bit on those views at this time. It has been observed that the United Nations has been extremely successful in the decolonization of over 80 Territories since the Second World War. However, this decolonization era did not end with the independence of Namibia. Territories have not become essentially self-governing, as has been implied by some delegations, and the fact that the remaining Territories are mostly small islands in the Caribbean and Pacific in no way diminishes their importance, nor does it curtail the applicability of the principles of self-determination contained in the Charter and relevant General Assembly resolutions. Our Territories are small, but our political, socio-economic and constitutional aspirations are no less important than those of larger Territories whose people have already completed a genuine act of self-determination. Therefore, the applicability of the relevant provisions of the Charter and General Assembly resolutions is without question.

The view has been expressed by several delegations that, as a result of the decrease in ideological tensions, the work of the Special Committee should be reviewed with the aim of reforming it. The lessening of East-West tensions has, in effect, provided a new foundation for more effective operations, but such ideological considerations were never germane to the substance of the decolonization issue. Therefore, support for a more efficient approach to the work of the United Nations, in general, and to the work of the Special Committee is welcome, as long as this does not represent a downgrading of the Organization in the international decolonization process by lessening the

(Mr. Corbin)

emphasis on the specific conditions of the individual Territories concerned, the importance of which is emphasized in Article 73 of the Charter. It is therefore apparent that, in supporting the general premise of modernization within the United Nations as a whole, it must be clear that the methodology in carrying out this reform should be analysed carefully, particularly as such new methods affect the very people whom the process is designed to assist.

It has been suggested that the Committee was originally designed as a forum for the presentation of the views of the Terrritories concerned and that the Committee should reorient its work to provide for such direct participation. That this was to have been an original intention of the Committee is welcome information for us, albeit quite surprising, since such direct participation by representatives of Non-Self-Governing Territories in the work of the Special Committee has not often occurred, and invitations to these Territories have not been routinely provided by the Committee or by the Administering Authorities. The participation of our Government in the work of this Committee, however, does date back to 1975. Unfortunately, this is an exception to the rule. Quite logically, information provided by the elected Governments of the Territories concerned remains the best source of determining the actual situation in those Territories.

Several delegations have expressed reservations regarding the nature of the resolutions emanating from the Special Committee. It is very difficult to support the premise that the concepts of the resolutions on the individual Territories are outdated without also concluding that the principles contained in those resolutions are also outdated. These resolutions deal with such issues as the right to self-determination, assistance to the Territories in political education, the right of the peoples to own their natural resources,

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visiting missions and other matters. All of these principles certainly still apply and were endorsed by representatives of the Non-Self-Governing Territories who participated at the Caribbean regional seminar on decolonization held last June.

It has also been noted that the language of some of these resolutions duplicates similar language in resolutions of previous years. The response to this contention has been that many of these principles must be repeated in succeeding resolutions, simply because actions recommended to be taken which are based on these principles are not carried out or are partially carried out. Several examples are in order. The right to self-determination is inalienable, and is referred to in the resolutions on the Territories. Yet, constitutional mechanisms which govern the political relationship between a Territory and its Administering Power have been unilaterally enacted, based on the premise of the superiority of the laws of the Administering Power over international law. Since such a process is inconsistent with the legitimate exercise of self-determination, does this mean that self-determination as defined by the Charter is no longer applicable to these remaining Territories? Or should there be a reform introduced to advocate for compliance with these resolutions, which must be repeated because they are not carried out?

(Mr. Corbin)

Another example is the assistance to be provided to the Governments of the Territories to create conditions for a legitimate act of self-determination. Such assistance has not yet been forthcoming.

In the same connection, resolutions on the Territories reiterate the concepts of the decolonization Declaration, which call, inter alia, for the transfer of powers to the people of the Territories. Since no such transfer of powers has taken place in most of the Non-Self-Governing Territories and, in fact, many of the Territories exist under administrative arrangements where such a transfer of power would be deemed inconsistent with the prevailing conditions, does this mean that the transfer-of-powers provision of the decolonization Declaration is null and void with respect to our Territories? Or does it mean that we must reaffirm the principles contained in resolution 1514 (XV) and resolution 1541 (XV) and put forward a measure to ensure that these resolutions can be implemented?

The next example is the question of the ownership of land and natural resources in the Territories. Claims by the Governments of the Non-Self-Governing Territories for the right to their exclusive economic zones are simply ignored and since their lands are often sold without regard for the people, this issue is also inconsistent with relevant provisions of the Charter as well as of General Assembly resolutions. Does this mean that these resolutions are no longer appropriate?

Another example can be found in the area of visiting missions. This seems to be a very contentious issue, difficult to discuss. But does the fact that it is controversial mean that we should not discuss it at all? Does the fact that several territorial Governments have requested visiting missions in recent years and that these requests have effectively been denied signal that

(Mr. Corbin)

the language on visiting missions should be dropped from future resolutions? Or does it signal that we should put in place a methodology of ensuring that these missions are carried out?

A final example deals with the question of the political actions. Perhaps the prevailing view in the 1960s, when many of the Non-Self-Governing Territories achieved independence, was that independence was the only option. However, consistent with the reaffirmation of the principles contained in resolution 1541 (XV), there is a recognition that independence is an option along with integration and free association - so long as the international criteria set forth in resolution 1541 (XV) are observed. That is to say, a Territory, pursuant to this resolution, cannot be considered integrated with an independent State unless it is

> "on the basis of complete equality ... and equal rights and opportunities for representation and effective participation at all levels in the executive, legislative and judicial organs of government". (Resolution 1541 (XV), annex, principle VIII)

Similarly, a Territory cannot be regarded as having achieved full association with an independent State, again consistent with resolution 1541 (XV), without the power

> "to modify the status of that Territory [and] ... to determine its internal constitution without outside interference, in accordance with due constitutional processes and the freely expressed wishes of the people". (ibid., principle VII)

Such delegations have expressed support for the omnibus resolution which we have before us and which purports to rationalize the work of the Special Committee by replacing 10 individual-Territory resolutions with one resolution

(Mr. Corbin)

of principles, relegating mention of individual conditions unique to each Territory to the reports of the Special Committee.

This concept of the abolition of the specific General Assembly resolutions on individual Territories was opposed last year by two Governments of Non-Self-Governing Territories in separate communications to the Special Committee. One territorial Government expressed the view that the proposal represented a downgrading of emphasis on the political, constitutional and socio-economic needs of the individual Territories which are at different levels of development under different constitutional arrangements, requiring individual recommendations which can be taken seriously only if contained in individual resolutions of the General Assembly, not merely as reports of the Special Committee.

The concept of an omnibus resolution is not new. The General Assembly has approved composite resolutions on the Territories since its inception. It abandoned this practice for some Territories in 1975 and for the remainder of the Territories in 1981 because of its ineffectiveness in addressing the specific conditions in the individual Territories.

To return to this practice would be, in our view, a retrogressive step, inconsistent with Article 73 of the Charter, which places great emphasis on

> "the particular circumstances of each Territory and its peoples and their varying states of advancement".

A careful review of the resolutions on individual Territories adopted by the General Assembly at its forty-fifth session confirms the need to retain their individuality, since they focus on specific conditions in the individual Territories. All these resolutions not only serve as an accurate, timely and updated reflection of the reality of the situations in the Territories

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concerned, but also provide remedial solutions specific to the conditions existing in these Territories.

It is therefore difficult, at best, to see how a composite resolution with no such recommendations for positive action can serve to accomplish anything more than to lessen the commitment on the part of the international community with respect to the decolonization of our remaining Territories, and effectively to remove these prescriptions for action contained in the operative paragraphs of the individual-Territory resolutions.

What is rationalized by creating one long omnibus resolution to replace 10 shorter ones? It is interesting to note that the proposed resolution, by some formula, includes only 10 Non-Self-Governing Territories out of the total of 18 Territories. This is presumably a result of the fact that these 10 Territories fall under the Sub-Committee on Small Territories. Territories such as the Falklands (Malvinas) Islands, Gibraltar and St. Helena would presumably retain their individual resolutions. Yet there has been no explanation for this exclusion. Does it mean that the specific prescriptions would apply only to those Territories that have been excluded from the omnibus resolution, while those contained in the omnibus resolution would have no prescriptions at all?

In view of the fact that the year 1991 marked the beginning of the Decade for the Eradication of Colonialism, it is ironic that such proposals to downgrade the effectiveness and the commitment of the United Nations in the area of decolonization are actually being considered, when this Decade should be stimulating new approaches to conclude successfully the self-determination process by the year 2000.

(Mr. Corbin)

Following an intensive review of this resolution-consolidation proposal, the elected heads of Government of the Non-Self-Governing Territories of Guam, American Samoa and the United States Virgin Islands, along with the elected heads of Government of Puerto Rico and the Northern Mariana Islands, approved on 3 February 1991 a five-Power resolution which my Government would formally submit to the Committee for its review, if it deems this necessary. This five-Power resolution concludes that the omnibus-resolution proposal would de-emphasize the work of the Special Committee at a time when representatives of the Non-Self-Governing Territories have expressed the importance of continued and enhanced work by the Special Committee, efforts called for at the decolonization seminars held last year in commemoration of the thirtieth anniversary of the decolonization Declaration.

(Mr. Corbin)

The position of the five elected Heads of Government also reaffirmed that individual resolutions on the Territories represent the most important and tangible product of the United Nations, as these resolutions are utilized as guidelines for political, socio-economic and constitutional development, and that the replacement of these resolutions with an omnibus resolution will result in the intent of the United Nations role in the decolonization process becoming null and void.

We are concerned here that the neutralization of international oversight of the decolonization process could essentially result from such an omnibus proposal. My Government has looked very closely at these provisions, and has looked at a number of reforms which we would like to see regarding the work of this Committee in the future which would be consistent with the current review, consistent with the proposal put forth by the representative of the United Republic of Tanzania. We agree with the proposal that representatives of the Territories should be invited to participate in meetings of the Special Committee and its subcommittees in an official observer capacity. Additionally, visiting missions should be facilitated, and dissemination of information on decolonization to the Territories should also be facilitated.

In light of the lateness of the hour, we would wish to conclude our remarks at this time, and thank you once more for the opportunity of addressing the Committee.

The CHAIRMAN: We are limited by time and also by the facilities available to continue our meeting. I intended to proceed to ways and means of sorting out the various proposals, and also to the discussion on how best to proceed from here and the mechanisms for doing so. If there is no objection, I propose to take up these and related matters at a meeting of the Special Committee tomorrow. We shall proceed accordingly.

Mr. LEHNE (Norway): I wish to comment on some remarks which have been made concerning the concept of an omnibus resolution, since there are obviously some very serious misconceptions floating around as to what such a concept is, particularly as put forward by the last speaker. It is not - and I think I made that very clear in my statement - our intention to do harm to the individuality or the specificity of individual Territories in the text that we plan to introduce later on in the Sub-Committee on Small Territories.

When reference is being made to a draft resolution, that is obviously false, because there is no such draft resolution before the Committee, and this ought to be made very clear: there is no draft resolution before the Committee, and therefore any references to such a resolution must be references to the resolution introduced last year. The resolution we plan to introduce later on in the Sub-Committee will indeed, as I said in my statement, have to avoid repetition and common language, but must underline the specific situation in each of the individual Non-Self-Governing Territories. I will come back later to the specifics of such a proposal.

The meeting rose at 1.25 p.m.

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SPECIAL COMMITTEE ON THE SITUATION WITH REGARD TO THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE DECLARATION ON THE GRANTING OF INDEPENDENCE TO COLONIAL COUNTRIES AND PEOPLES

VERBATIM RECORD OF THE 1379th MEETING

Held at Headquarters, New York,
on Tuesday, 23 April 1991, at 10.30 a.m.

Chairman: Mr. TADESSE (Ethiopia)

- Organization of work

- Request for hearing

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The meeting was called to order at 11.15 a.m.

ORGANIZATION OF WORK

The CHAIRMAN: At our meeting yesterday, we listened to delegations that advanced some proposals for reviewing our method of work and to delegations that made observations on those proposals. I shall not attempt here to summarize the views expressed, as many of the arguments advanced on both sides speak for themselves.

It is most helpful that we also had the opportunity to listen to the views of at least one of the elected representatives of one of the Non-Self-Governing Territories on our agenda. I say that because I am sure we consider their voices and aspirations paramount.

Today, perhaps with a brief exchange of views and given the likelihood of exploring areas of convergence, it is my hope that we shall be in a position to channel these discussions into concrete efforts that can give us a general direction towards the consideration of the proposals, in order to further explore their merits.

I shall now call on those delegations that wish to make statements before we proceed with our consideration of the various proposals.

Mrs. KING-ROUSSEAU (Trinidad and Tobago): On behalf of the delegation of Trinidad and Tobago I wish to thank you sincerely, Mr. Chairman, for having convened this important meeting of the Special Committee to review its work. In view of the time constraints which we face and the need to arrive at some early decision that would facilitate the work of the Sub-Committee's during the current session, my delegation will make only a few comments at this time on the broader issues under consideration and will concentrate on matters that affect the deliberations of the Sub-Committees.

One of the broader issues on which my delegation must now comment relates to the Special Committee's agenda. It may be more productive in the current process, which we all wish to be effective, to avoid sweeping statements that do not coincide with the facts as we all know them to be. With respect to the Special Committee's agenda, it should not be characterized as artificial and warranting a prescription for a thorough purge. Of the 36 items listed in document A/AC.109/L.1755, can the Special Committee in all seriousness be expected to remove from consideration the 21 items that deal specifically and directly with the situation in the remaining colonies? I should think not. Or should we fail to address such matters of importance as the issue of visiting missions; the issue of training facilities for the peoples of the Non-Self-Governing Territories; the issue of compliance with Article 73 e of the United Nations Charter; the item on the International Decade to Eradicate Colonialism, which encapsulates the main objective of the United Nations in the field of decolonization; the issue of dissemination of information, the importance of which was reinforced at the two regional seminars, in Barbados and Vanuatu, held in 1990; the issues of the implementation of the Declaration by specialized agencies and institutions of the United Nations and compliance with the Declaration by Member States, both of which, if not pursued, could

(Mrs. King-Rousseau,
Trinidad and Tobago)

render meaningless the annual preparation of reports and recommendations concerning the Non-Self-Governing Territories? Again, the answer should be "No".

With respect to the deliberations of the Sub-Committees, the proposal of the delegation of Papua New Guinea to merge the two bodies is a constructive one that my delegation hopes will be accepted. Some of the advantages of such a merger have already been eloquently addressed in different forums by Ambassador Lohia of Papua New Guinea.

On another matter, since September 1990 there have been frequent references to the two regional seminars held in 1990. Some delegations within and outside the Special Committee have sought to duplicate the general nature of the texts adopted at the seminars. In this connection I wish to point out the following: The regional seminars were organized for specific purposes, which did not include the important annual task of the Special Committee of 24 to review the situation in each Non-Self-Governing Territory. Delegations therefore cannot and should not expect to take the same approach to the issue of decolonization as was taken at the two seminars.

It is clear that the seminars were conducted under certain time constraints, and this was very important. It should also be acknowledged that the diverse and largely non-governmental nature of the participation at the seminars increased the unpredictability and the possibility of participants' pursuing agendas, political or otherwise, which were divorced from the field of decolonization. That situation did not materialise: hence the importance of restricting the deliberations during the seminars to action-oriented proposals and the enumeration of principles.

(Mrs. King-Rousseau,
Trinidad and Tobago)

The regional seminars were very useful, not only because of the final reports that were adopted by consensus, but also because they afforded representatives of the Non-Self-Governing Territories and some of the people of those Territories an all-too-rare opportunity to exchange views and ideas and to comprehend to some extent some of the useful avenues open to them at the United Nations and elsewhere for advancing their situation.

Trinidad and Tobago was fortunate to have been one of the members of the Special Committee selected to attend the seminar in Barbados. It was enlightening for me personally to witness, particularly during some informal gatherings, the eagerness with which some of the representatives of the Territories sought related information from each other on their respective situations and on the role the United Nations can play in the decolonization process.

That underscores the importance of giving serious consideration to the proposal voiced during the Special Committee's meeting yesterday to accord observer status to representatives of the Territories in meetings of the Subcommittees and the Special Committee of 24. The views of the people of the remaining colonies must remain paramount. If the Special Committee accepts such a proposal, then consideration would also have to be given to providing the representatives with the means of attending such meetings.

It was also edifying at the regional seminar in Barbados to observe the lack of knowledge about the role of the United Nations and the Special Committee in the decolonization process and about the political options available to the Territories. Indeed, as was reported in document A/AC.109/1043, the Minister for Social Services of the Turks and Caicos Islands noted that statements at the seminar had proved that the people

(Mrs. King-Rousseau,
Trinidad and Tobago)

of the remaining British dependent Territories in the Caribbean were ignorant or, at best, uneducated about independence and other available options for the future political status of the Territories. The need for visiting missions and for political education programmes to be undertaken in the Territories is therefore also very important.

On the question of the proposal to consolidate into one text recommendations on 10 small Non-Self-Governing Territories, Trinidad and Tobago has never rejected that proposal, and we have no intention of doing so now. However, from the outset my delegation cautioned about certain dangers, which we can perhaps overcome with a flexible, imaginative approach. In dealing with this issue we must guard against the possibility of the consideration of the situation in some Territories being held hostage to difficulties in reaching consensus on one or two questions, which may be difficult. This predicament can lead to the worrisome practice of trade-offs in the consideration of two distinct questions. It is possible that this situation can arise with a consolidated text.

Given the views expressed yesterday by one of the representatives of the Non-Self-Governing Territories, I believe that perhaps we may consider another option available to the Special Committee in dealing with this issue.

(Mrs. King-Rousseau, Trinidad and Tobago)

Perhaps we can adopt one resolution on principles while continuing to adopt individual resolutions on each Territory. Those individual resolutions would not reiterate principles, but would make a specific reference to the general resolution adopted containing such principles.

Another option available in the consolidation of texts could be the adoption of one resolution with a common administering Power.

Yet another option could be the adoption of resolutions which would include the situations of Territories in a specific region - for instance, a resolution dealing with the Caribbean Territories and a resolution dealing with the Pacific Territories.

These are not proposals that we are making at this time; we are simply exploring the various options.

The Trinidad and Tobago delegation remains eager to cooperate with other members of the Special Committee in the current review process.

Mr. BYKOV (Union of Soviet Socialist Republics) (interpretation from Russian): First, Sir, let me associate myself with other delegations in expressing our gratitude to you for your initiative in convening this meeting, which has made it possible for us to have a broad and interesting exchange of views. Yesterday's and today's exchange of views on ways of improving the work of the Committee and of all the other United Nations bodies that deal with the problems of decolonization has been intense. Some very interesting views have been expressed. The ideas and proposals are obviously far from being identical, but although sometimes diverging and even contradictory views have been expressed this exchange is still useful, and we hope that it will be productive.

(Mr. Bykov, USSR)

What is important is to note the common element revealed during our discussion, which is that it can, and we believe will, serve as a unifying factor for our further work. We have seen a common desire to find ways and means of heightening the effectiveness of the activities of the United Nations, and in particular of our Committee, in the implementation of decolonization.

Our delegation fully supports the view you have expressed, Mr. Chairman, to the effect that in the discussion now going on we are talking about continuing the efforts to accelerate the decolonization process in accordance with the United Nations Charter and the Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples. It is well known that in recent years, in view of the positive events which have occurred in the world generally, it has become even more urgently necessary to increase the role and effectiveness of the United Nations. This is true of every area of our Organization's activities, including decolonization.

In speaking in favour of intensifying the effectiveness of the United Nations in all areas, we take a positive attitude to the efforts to rationalize the functioning of the United Nations bodies dealing with the problems of decolonization. We are firmly convinced that the work done in this area should be carried out with the aim of finding generally acceptable, realistic, balanced, well-considered approaches oriented towards achieving significant practical results. This is dictated by the desire to achieve as rapidly as possible the aims set out in the Charter and the Declaration, on the basis of the principles they contain.

We feel that many ideas and concrete proposals which have been expressed here during the exchange of views are worthy of very attentive study and

(Mr. Bykov, USSR)

consideration. Some of the ideas might be implemented in the course of the practical work in our Committee and its Subcommittees - naturally, on condition that they will indeed promote the effectiveness of our work, in the interest of achieving the goals of the Declaration, on the basis of the freedom of choice of each people concerned. In this respect, our delegation is ready to continue to cooperate with other members of the Committee.

The CHAIRMAN: We shall now proceed to set a general framework for consideration of the various remarks, suggestions and proposals made so far, which are varied and which require a wide exchange of views. The first thing to do, even if at a preliminary stage, is to try to categorize the main issues that have been raised. The first category is mainly the consolidation of our draft resolutions. I have in mind the point raised regarding the omnibus draft resolution.

(The Chairman)

The second category relates to the language of a number of our draft resolutions, such as those on the activities of foreign economic interests in the Territories, military arrangements, and the role to be played by the specialized agencies in the implementation of the Declaration.

The third general category concerns items which are considered by some not to be within the mandate of the Committee. Perhaps comments related to name-calling, raised by some members, could also fall within this category.

Others have raised the question of merging the two Sub-Committees - this has been touched upon by several speakers - and the question of the duration of our sessions.

Those, I think, are the major categories of issues raised in several statements by way of proposals and suggestions.

Does any member wish to comment on the general thrust of the discussion?

Mr. HERNANDEZ MACHADO (Cuba) (interpretation from Spanish): While it is true that several delegations have referred to the issues you mentioned and that they should be further discussed and examined, it is true also that other matters were put to the Committee, to which you did not refer.

An example is the emphasis placed on periodicity for visiting missions to all the colonial Territories in order to secure first-hand information about the events in those Territories. Another related to the question of disseminating information from the relevant United Nations bodies and seeking all possible avenues for this, so that not only Committee members, but also other Members of the Organization, the peoples of the colonial Territories and the world at large, can be made aware of the specific characteristics of each colonial Territory and of the work that is being done.

(Mr. Hernandez Machado, Cuba)

A third proposal, made yesterday and today by several delegations, was that the Committee consider guaranteeing permanent observer status to representatives of the colonial Territories in the activities of the Special Committee and its sub-committees, and in other decolonization activities of the United Nations. This morning one delegation noted - and this is very important - that this involves not only a decision on whether or not to guarantee that status, but also the fact that there are colonial Territories that would require funding to enable their representatives to participate in these activities. This too needs to be addressed.

Reference has been made - particularly yesterday - to one of the principal aspects of information, that is, the particular characteristics of Territories. We need to emphasize the unique features of each Territory. For example, today, 23 April, is Spanish-Language Day; the people of a Territory within the purview of this Committee - Puerto Rico - recently received the Principe de Asturia Prize for declaring Spanish the sole official language of the Territory. That is an interesting and characteristic development. Since 1902, the Puerto Rican people had had both Spanish and English imposed upon them as official languages. Their decision reflects a specific feature of the Territory; it was a decision by the people of that Territory to try to rescue their history, their traditions and their customs, and to live their own cultural identity, of which they had been deprived for many years by circumstances.

Those are matters my delegation believes also need to be included among the major concerns to be discussed in the future.

The CHAIRMAN: Those are important points that were raised by many speakers; they are indeed concerns that we have considered as important agenda items in several of our discussions in plenary meetings, in seminars and on various other occasions. They remain important today and should be included among our concerns. Visiting missions, dissemination of up-to-date information giving a full picture of developments in the Territories, and participation by representatives of the Territories are, as suggested, issues that require discussion and analysis both as individual subjects and as they relate to cooperation by the administering Powers.

It was my thought that these could be taken up within the general categories I mentioned, but I think it important that they also be considered on their own merits.

The question of the specific characteristics of Territories has been clearly noted in the discussion of our omnibus draft resolution; many have pointed out that any consideration of consolidating draft resolutions on the Territories should take due account of the specificity of those Territories. This point would figure in those discussions.

Mr. DIARRA (Mali) (interpretation from French): My delegation would like to add a point which we consider to be very important and which could contribute to changing our approach to questions of decolonization. The proposal is based on a document submitted some days ago by a delegation which participated in the work of the working group established by the Chairman of the Fourth Committee. The proposal, which I have had an opportunity to comment on before, would have the Committee prepare guidelines for making local populations more aware of their own fate. This is somewhat different from our approach to date; traditionally, we acted through the administering

(Mr. Diarra, Mali)

Powers to reach the local populations. Our recommendations were directed to the administering Powers.

We would now seek to reach directly the populations of the Non-Self-Governing Territories and to provide them with suggestions and guidelines. This could be the subject of further consideration within the structure we establish to examine the categories the Chairman has just set out.

In addition, my delegation wonders if it would be useful to consider the matter of the selective use of certain names - now in the third category - under the second category, which relates to changing the language of some of the draft resolutions we have submitted in the past.

The CHAIRMAN: With regard to the last suggestion just made by the representative of Mali in which he raised a query on selectivity, I think that that would come under the category of language and name-calling, and can be taken up under the relevant part of the discussion. The other suggestion he made has been duly noted. I think it will be considered in the appropriate framework.

I would say at this point that these are just preliminary suggestions, which can be enriched and changed or otherwise developed, as I am trying to do, if we proceed to create the mechanism for continuing these discussions and coming up with recommendations. The participants in that mechanism can agree on the procedure on how best to include as many of the proposals and topics raised and take up related matters concerning the ways to increase the effectiveness of the Committee's work. These are only general suggestions, which are by no means conclusive. As I said, they can be enriched, altered and modified. New, related elements can be suggested. Of course, we cannot go on having an open-ended list for discussions. We shall try to incorporate the suggestions within the framework of the major points raised here. This question can also be taken up, first, during the organizational session of the body we will create.

Mr. LOHIA (Papua New Guinea): Mr. Chairman, I would simply like to endorse the leadership that you have provided for us in the form of general categories under which specific items can be listed. On that basis, in our future work, some items could be shifted from one category to the other and new categories could be added, depending on how the discussions develop. The approach I took at the last informal consultations of the Fourth Committee under the chairmanship of the Vice-Chairman of the Fourth Committee reflects the need to identify some specific general pattern of problems, which we would

(Mr. Lohia, Papua New Guinea)

then continue to examine. There was general agreement on this idea on the part of the many delegations attending that meeting. Therefore, I would simply like to endorse your approach to dealing with this problem.

The CHAIRMAN: If that is generally agreed at this point, we can proceed to deal with how to continue our discussions. In this regard, based on my consultations with members, I suggest that perhaps a better approach would be to create a working group to examine the various proposals and make recommendations to the Committee, because the view of members is that it might not be as helpful and as productive if we were to continue detailed discussions on each proposal at the level of plenary meetings of the Committee. Instead, a working group would best facilitate our work. That is the proposal I would like to submit to the Committee for its consideration. Does any member wish to comment?

Mr. LEHNE (Norway): I think it is a very good proposal to continue the work in a smaller forum, perhaps in the form of a working group.

I am wondering whether we might not discuss this in the Sub-Committee on Small Territories, since most of the matters on your list concern or relate directly to the work of the Sub-Committee in its discussions of the reports and in the formulation of the draft resolutions. In my opinion, this working group or smaller body could be the Sub-Committee on Small Territories. I would not suggest that we do so right now, but I just wish to express my feeling that, if the Sub-Committee were mandated to deal with these matters and then report back to the plenary Committee at a later stage when we have come further in our discussions on each particular Territory, in my opinion this would be a better solution. But I leave it to you, Sir, and to the Committee to take a decision on the matter.

The CHAIRMAN: Let me seek the views of the members on this, and then perhaps I will also explain why I suggested a working group.

Mr. LOHIA (Papua New Guinea): With regard to the remarks just made by the representative of Norway, who suggested that the Sub-Committee on Small Territories should take up the matter, my only comment is that my proposal involves that Sub-Committee. If we were to discuss this now, it would put the Chairman and the members in a difficult situation. So, I think your proposal, Sir, would be much better; it removes the discussions on the review to improve our work from the existing legal parameters that the Committee has already set.

The CHAIRMAN: The idea of suggesting a working group stems, as members know, from the fact that while, justifiably, some of the topics raised and issues pointed out are related to the small Territories in particular, there are certain other issues that are interrelated and that overlap with matters taken up by the other sub-committee and indeed with the larger concerns of the Committee itself. So, one possibility is such a working group, especially if it is open-ended and makes it possible to seek more general views on broader questions, including those of the small Territories. Then, when the recommendations and suggestions are forwarded to the Committee, they would already have commanded broad-based support. That is the main reason, but members are free to comment and make suggestions.

Mr. SLABY (Czechoslovakia): First of all, I would like to thank you for your well-done work since yesterday's meeting in categorizing the proposals raised at that meeting. I would also like to assess the idea for continuing the discussion in a smaller forum than this one. As all of the members know, there is a forum, an open-ended informal meeting of the Fourth Committee, which is discussing the same questions.

(Mr. Slaby, Czechoslovakia)

My delegation is not against any kind of discussion, but it thinks that there should be not only discussion but some achievement from discussion.

The proposal is to merge the two forums - that is, the working group of the Committee of 24 proposed by the Chairman and the existing forum: the open-ended informal meeting of the Fourth Committee.

Mr. ACOSTA FRAGACHAN (Venezuela) (interpretation from Spanish): My delegation has been listening carefully to the views expressed by representatives who have already spoken. We find them extremely interesting, in principle, and we agree with your suggestion, Mr. Chairman, that, tentatively, we should try to organize our work on the lines you have indicated. I take it that the list before us is a tentative list that does not imply a categorization according to the importance of the proposals. I believe that such a categorization should be left to the working group you have suggested.

We fully support the creation of a working group. We share the view expressed by the Permanent Representative of Papua New Guinea that it should be constituted within the framework of the plenary Committee, in order to take into account sensitive feelings about some of the proposals presented. I also firmly believe that the working group should be open-ended. Participation should be open to any members of the Committee; their ideas should be discussed on the same footing as those put forward so far.

I would also venture to broaden somewhat the idea of the working group that you have put forward. We could categorize the list of proposals that would be submitted subsequently to the plenary Committee. They could be discussed at meetings that would be scheduled by the Committee for that purpose.

(Mr. Acosta Fragachan, Venezuela)

For the moment we have no further ideas to present. We fully support the work the Committee is engaged in with a view to rationalizing its work, and we look forward to taking an active part in it.

The CHAIRMAN: I would reaffirm that this listing is tentative and is by no means an indication of ranking. These matters would be taken up and discussed by the working group.

Mr. MDEE (United Republic of Tanzania): I wish only to endorse fully, what you have proposed, Mr. Chairman, as a way of moving forward.

I think that the fact that there is another working group handling the Fourth Committee is a separate question. The two forums are not mutually exclusive.

In my opinion, the discussions we have had here for the past two days are basically discussions of this Committee. I would hope that the working group comes out of this Committee.

Mr. HERNANDEZ MACHADO (Cuba) (interpretation from Spanish): My delegation joins other delegations that have expressed support for your proposal, Mr. Chairman, to create a working group of the Committee of 24.

We share the view of the Permanent Representative of Papua New Guinea that this working group should not belong to either of the two Sub-Committees; it should be a working group of the Committee itself, open to participation by all members of the Committee who wish to participate; it should discuss all the ideas put forward, as you said, Mr. Chairman, by members of the Committee or other Members of the United Nations, by the Fourth Committee and by representatives of colonial Territories who have been given an opportunity to express their views. Subsequently, the results of the study in the working group would be submitted to the plenary Committee, where the relevant decisions would be taken.

(Mr. Hernandez Machado, Cuba)

Let me also say that, as was suggested a moment ago by the representative of Tanzania, the exercise in which we have been participating since yesterday morning - which is a continuation of the process of improving our Committee's working machinery - is internal to us; it does not contradict the exercise taking place in the Fourth Committee. We do not see the need to integrate it or link it with the exercise in the Fourth Committee - although, of course, once our Committee has analysed all these aspects and reached final conclusions, they will logically be shared with others. But I do not think, as I have said, that it is necessary to merge these groups. The analysis will be done in our Committee in conjunction with the exercise being carried out through the informal consultation group of the Fourth Committee.

Mr. LAWSON (Sierra Leone): I must first of all apologize for my delegation's participating only now in this important series of consultations in which the Special Committee is engaged. Our inability to participate earlier was the result of our preoccupation in the Mission with a number of other important matters.

Having followed the discussion so far, and also taking into account your summary, Mr. Chairman, of the views that were expressed during the earlier meetings, we feel that the proposal to set up an independent working group is commendable. It would provide a much more informal setting in which to discuss proposals that have been put forward as well as other ideas that have been floated.

Our understanding of this procedure is that the list of items the Chairman has enumerated is not final and that we shall have flexibility in so far as the list relates to other areas within the Committee's mandate. We have in mind, of course, issues that relate, for example, to the responsibility of the administering Powers to provide information under

(Mr. Lawson, Sierra Leone)

Article 73 e which we believe warrants consideration by this Committee, as well as other issues. We feel that there is much merit in discussing this matter at this time, especially as we as a delegation had made known our position on the matter last year.

We have listened also to the proposal that we could perhaps consider these matters within the ongoing informal working group of the Fourth Committee. While there might be some inclination to support that view, we might run into certain difficulties.

(Mr. Lawson, Sierra Leone)

We feel that last year and in some years before that there was an initiative which emerged from within the Special Committee to embark on a rationalization of its work. We believe this initiative should be pursued by the Committee separately, independently of whatever efforts the Fourth Committee might be undertaking. Of course, there might be a possibility that certain discussions might run parallel in both working groups; this is all to the good. At the end of the day, we might find ourselves in a position where we could be able to consolidate certain aspects of both our working groups' deliberations, and agree, perhaps, on a further course of action from there. But our feeling as a delegation is that indeed we would prefer that an independent working group of the Special Committee should be established; during the course of its deliberations, we shall be able to undertake a full discussion of these matters.

The CHAIRMAN: I now call on the representative of New Zealand, an administering Power.

Mr. KEMBER (New Zealand): My delegation has followed with considerable interest the discussion in the Special Committee today and yesterday, and we look forward to the Special Committee's continuing its examination and review of its work in one forum or another.

I have one technical question relating to our role as an administering Power. We have a clearly defined status vis-à-vis the plenary meetings of the Special Committee, and indeed the meetings of Sub-Committees of the Special Committee. My question is, if the Special Committee is to set up a working group, what would be the dialogue status, if you like, of administering Powers with that working group?

The CHAIRMAN: I think most of the points have been covered by members: I want only to touch on one or two briefly.

(The Chairman)

The first point relates to the working group; it needs to be established within the framework of the Committee of 24, the plenary Committee. Of course, as was pointed out by members, it will be open-ended, and there will be ample opportunity for all who wish to make comments or advance any ideas pertinent to the deliberations of the working group.

As far as the working group of the Fourth Committee is concerned, of course we have in fact already had a chance to benefit from the outcome of the informal consultation yesterday. This can continue in the same manner in the working group. The working group needs to derive all the information possible to enrich and strengthen its deliberations with a view to coming up with helpful, constructive and strong recommendations that would make its proceedings more effective and thereby facilitate the attainment of the ultimate objective: the speedy implementation of the Declaration on decolonization.

As far as the question of participation by administering Powers is concerned, I think the open-ended nature of the working group and the follow-up to the discussions in the plenary Committee will enable the administering Powers to take a real part in the discussions of the working group. I do not think there are any reasons for restricting that participation. Perhaps members would like to correct me or indicate to me if there are any procedural or juridical limitations in this respect.

Mrs. KING-ROUSSEAU (Trinidad and Tobago): Of course Trinidad and Tobago has no objection to the participation of any of the administering Powers in our work: it can facilitate the effort to reach some sort of effective decisions. But I would at this stage just like to express the hope that the same opportunity to participate in the working group will be afforded to any representative of any of the Non-Self-Governing Territories.

The CHAIRMAN: That is the case, because, as we have said, nobody could be a better spokesman for the Territories than the representatives of the Territories themselves. Whatever our deliberations and whatever positions we have established, all along the Committee has taken due account of the positions, statements, suggestions and aspirations of the peoples of the Territories as expressed by the representatives themselves.

Mr. SLABY (Czechoslovakia): I must apologize for speaking once more, but let me attempt to describe the situation which we are now creating.

After the establishment of the working group of the Committee of 24, open-ended of course, we will have this working group, with participation by some - I repeat: some; do not have any illusions - members of the Committee of 24. I will speak openly: the working group will be composed of those members that are more or less satisfied with the way in which the Committee of 24 is handling its affairs, and maybe two, or even three, members that had made some proposals for improving its work. This working group will submit its conclusions to the Committee of 24.

On the other side, we will have the open-ended, informal meeting of the Fourth Committee, with participation by more than 50 United Nations Member States, but, in fact, without active involvement by the majority of the members of the Committee of 24. Maybe, even probably, this informal meeting will reach some conclusions and will submit them to the Fourth Committee.

Is that the best way to improve our work? My delegation is of the opinion that it is not.

The CHAIRMAN: I do not want to comment on the statement by the representative of Czechoslovakia because, in all honesty, I did not understand its exact objective. The members of the Committee of 24 are fully aware of the nature and the mandate of the two bodies of the General Assembly; we have our respective mandates and we have our respective programmes, and therefore I think we shall proceed accordingly.

There have never been problems of this nature when we have taken up similar issues - because we do deal with similar issues. The manner and intensity with which we deal with these issues is clearly demarcated in our mandates. Thus, the Fourth Committee has its own mandate and its own procedure for carrying it out; we have our own mandate, and we proceed accordingly.

I do not think there will be any problem. Where there is a need to cooperate, we always do. We shall continue to cooperate, we shall continue to exchange ideas and we shall continue to collaborate on our common endeavours. And where there is a need to proceed differently on our respective paths, we do so - but all in the interest of attaining the same objectives. I do not think there is any clash.

(The Chairman)

Given those observations, may I take it that the Special Committee agrees to establish the working group to proceed with the examination of the proposals and to come up with recommendations to the Special Committee in due time?

It was so decided.

The CHAIRMAN: I should also like to propose to the Special Committee that the Working Group be presided over by the Chairman of one of our sub-committees. In this case I have in mind Ambassador Lohia of Papua New Guinea to be the Chairman of the Working Group and preside over its deliberations. If I hear no objection, I shall take it that the Special Committee agrees with that proposal.

It was so decided.

Mr. LOHIA (Papua New Guinea): I should simply like to take the opportunity to thank you, Mr. Chairman, and the members of the Special Committee for having given me this responsibility. I shall do the best I can to assist the Special Committee to improve its work in the interests, first, of the colonized peoples and Territories and, secondly, of the United Nations and the Members involved in the Special Committee.

The CHAIRMAN: I would request that the Chairman of the Working Group continue consultations with a view to speeding up the meetings of the Group in order that its recommendations can be received as soon as possible so that we can prepare ourselves for the coming meetings and specifically so that the sub-committees can consider them prior to the conclusion of their annual work. The dates of meetings of the Working Group will be announced in the Journal.

(The Chairman)

That concludes our deliberations on the agenda item, "Organization of work", which pertains mainly to the various proposals relating to method of work.

REQUEST FOR HEARING

The CHAIRMAN: With reference to communication number 2299, which was circulated to the members of the Special Committee at the 1379th meeting, which contains a request for hearing on the question of Pitcairn, the Subcommittee on Petitions, Information and Assistance, at its 483rd meeting, held on 18 April, decided to recommend to the Special Committee that the request be granted.

In order to facilitate the work of the Special Committee, and in accordance with a decision taken by the Special Committee at its 1377th meeting, on 21 February 1991, by which the item indicated was allocated to the bodies concerned for consideration and report, I wish to suggest that, subject to the concurrence of the Special Committee, the Sub-Committee on Small Territories hear the petitioner in connection with its consideration of the question.

It was so decided.

The meeting rose at 12.45 p.m.